

Department of Human Services

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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips Monday, May 7, 2007

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Article published May 6, 2007

Court honors attorney's request for test Mother accused of putting baby in bag faces psychiatric exam

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

His name is Kyle. He began his life April 23 by being born at home, tucked in a trash bag and placed in a garage on Westland's northwest side.

He has a 3-year-old sister, Kyra, and grandparents who love him enough to care for him while his mother faces charges of trying to kill him.

Kyle is too young to ask the obvious question: Why? Why would his 27-year-old mother, Valeeka Noelle Gartrell, be accused of such a heinous crime?

In court Thursday, defense attorney Barry Resnick began trying to get answers by saying he wants Gartrell to receive a psychiatric evaluation.

After reviewing the case, Resnick said, "I did have some concerns about her mental condition."

Dressed in green jail clothing, a tearful Gartrell faced visiting Westland District Judge Gail McKnight, who delayed a preliminary hearing until May 31 to allow for a psychiatric evaluation.

Gartrell, accused of delivering her own baby, could face penalties ranging up to life in prison if she's convicted of attempted murder and first-degree child abuse.

McKnight also granted Resnick's request to reduce Gartrell's bond from \$100,000 cash to \$50,000/10 percent, meaning the family could secure her release for \$5,000.

Gartrell plans to stay with a Westland cousin, Tonya Brown, who came to court Thursday. Brown has a 6-year-old daughter of her own, but she said the girl would stay upstairs with a grandmother and would not be in direct contact with Gartrell.

Brown also told McKnight that she is on disability and doesn't work outside the home.

She promised that Gartrell would be supervised around the clock.

Even so, McKnight ordered Gartrell to be placed on an electronic tether, and she told her not to have contact with any child under 18 years old. The judge also warned Gartrell to avoid weapons, alcohol and illegal drugs.

Resnick told McKnight that Gartrell is taking an undisclosed prescription medication.

Gartrell was charged amid accusations she gave birth to her own baby, put it in a trash bag and placed it in the garage of her parents' home near Joy and Hix roads.

Police believe that Gartrell gave birth around 11 a.m. April 23 and then woke her mother to tell her that she was bleeding. Gartrell's parents took her to St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, where doctors told them that Gartrell already had given birth, police Sgt. Chris Benson said.

Relatives returned to the home and found the baby after hearing cries coming from the garage, said Benson, who praised doctors and the relatives for saving the baby's life.

Gartrell has no criminal history. In court Thursday, Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Michael Woodyard didn't fight Resnick's request for a lower bond, leaving a decision to McKnight.

Woodyard simply told McKnight that prosecutors were concerned for Gartrell and any children that she may encounter -- concerns that McKnight tried to address in her court orders.

Probe examines alleged bus driver biting incident

By Michael Jones, Gaylord Herald Times Staff Writer
Posted Saturday, May 5, 2007 12:20 AM EDT

GAYLORD — A 43-year-old Gaylord Community Schools (GCS) bus driver is on suspension while school officials investigate allegations she bit two students and pushed another during an incident on her bus route last week.

A Gaylord Herald Times (GHT) investigation has found the alleged individual to be Patricia Lawes of 2677 Fischer Road in Livingston Township.

The incident also is being investigated by the Gaylord City Police.

Maureen Sorbert, director of the office of communications of the Michigan Dept. of Human Services (DHS), said the agency is investigating the state-licensed day care home owned and operated by Lawes. It has not been determined whether the school-police and state investigations are related.

GCS superintendent Cheryl Wojtas told the Gaylord Herald Times the veteran driver of 10 years will remain on suspension pending the outcome of a full internal investigation. According to Wojtas, the alleged incident came to light when it was reported by students. She indicated the parents of the students had been notified, as had police and the DHS.

Gaylord City Police Chief Joe FitzGerald said his department had been contacted Tuesday by GCS transportation supervisor Sue Jenkins and informed of the alleged incidents.

On Friday, school officials said the driver had been assigned to another bus route within the past two months due to alleged inappropriate language to students.

A Thursday news release from Wojtas stated, “The safety and security of students is, has been, and will continue to be a main priority of the GCS transportation department and the district as a whole. Any allegation made against a GCS staff member, building, department or program is handled with the utmost concern and compassion. It is this district’s intent and obligation to determine the true and factual nature surrounding any parent, student or staff concern.”

Wojtas said if further action is necessary pending the outcome of the district’s

investigation a recommendation would be made to the school board at their regular board meeting May 14.

The Herald Times attempt to contact Lawes was unsuccessful.



Toddlers living in filth, mom won't be charged

LAPEER CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, May 07, 2007

By James L. Smith

jmsmith@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6365

LAPEER - Criminal charges will not be brought against a 42-year-old mother whose children were found in "deplorable" conditions in the family home on MacKenzie Lane in Hadley Township April 27.

Two children, a 3-year-old girl, and a 2-year-old boy, were found naked with matted hair and festering sores in a home reeking of garbage and human feces by deputies who arrived to serve probate court papers to the mother.

In their report, Lapeer County Sheriff's deputy Stacy Stimson and reserve deputy Alex Romig, said they pounded on doors and windows and yelled when the two children appeared at a window.

After calling Protective Services, the deputies entered the home and a woman, later identified as the children's mother appeared.

The woman told deputies she had a bowel condition that required her to lock herself in the bathroom for long periods of time and that she had not heard the officers.

The boy had a cut on his chin that appeared to be infected. Neither child appeared able to talk, deputies said.

Trash bags and "trash neck deep" in the garage also littered the property, deputies said.

Both children were ordered immediately removed from the home by a judge.

With the children safely out of the home, prosecutors opted to let Protective Services handle the case, said assistant prosecutor Tom Sparrow.

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The word on bullying: It's up

Schools report 45,556 incidents; 2,653 have none

May 7, 2007

BY KATHLEEN GRAY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A state report on bullying shows that Algonac High School in St. Clair County received 1,435 complaints -- the most reported during the 2005-06 school year.

The state Center for Education Performance and Information said there were 45,556 complaints from 2,500 elementary, middle and high schools across Michigan.

The center said 2,653 schools reported no incidents. It was the first year the state tracked numbers of incidents. Previously schools received a low, medium or high ranking.

The number of complaints and calls from parents has prompted state and local officials to make anti-bullying legislation a priority.

In March, the state House of Representatives passed legislation that requires schools to adopt anti-bullying policies the state Board of Education developed in September.

This month, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners is to debate whether it will bring back a program to discourage bullying.

Also, state Sen. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland, is waiting for a Senate hearing on his proposed anti-bullying legislation. He proposed similar legislation in the Republican-controlled House last year, but it never got a hearing.

"I had a Michigan State University student working for me, who experienced it when he was growing up in Portage," Anderson said. "Then I started hearing about cases all around the state."

He said he hopes the House-passed legislation that also is waiting for a hearing in the Senate Education Committee will be debated before the next school year.

Sen. Wayne Kuipers, a Holland Republican who is chairman of the Senate Education Committee, hasn't scheduled a hearing and no decision has been made when the bills will be brought up, said Kuipers' clerk Mark Brieve.

In Oakland, Democratic commissioners want to reinstate a \$70,000 anti-bullying program run by the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office. The program ended when a federal grant expired.

"It's a small price to pay for our children's safety," said commissioner Karen Spector, D-West Bloomfield.

Republicans on the board, however, think the program should be run by the Oakland Intermediate School District.

Contact **KATHLEEN GRAY** at 313-223-4407 or gray@freepress.com.

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[From Lansing State Journal]

Business calendar

Meetings

Monday

- East Lansing Kiwanis Club, 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m., second floor, Michigan State University Union, Grand River Avenue and Abbott Road, East Lansing. Guests welcome. Speaker: Lt. Roy Holliday, Ingham County Sheriff Department, on the Ricky Holland murder case. Info: Ken Dimoff, 655-3099 or Chet Lewis, 351-6144 or www.kiwanisofel.org.



Police: Man kidnapped, sexually assaulted girl; then attacked officer

Of The Oakland Press

SOUTH LYON A man was arrested by police early Saturday after a violent struggle with an officer who allegedly saw him sexually abuse a little girl that he had kidnapped moments before.

South Lyon police Lt. Steven Sharpe said they are still trying to piece together the facts about the man, a 38-year-old who claims he's from Cleveland, Ohio.

Officers were first tipped off to what was going on when a person called them about 4:21 a.m. to report something suspicious was taking place on the roof of an apartment.

The apartment sits above a business in the 100 block of Lafayette Street in the downtown area, but faces the rear of the business. The roof of the apartment also appeared to be used as a patio.

Sharpe said the caller was Hispanic and didn't speak English very well, but indicated they needed to investigate what was going on.

When an officer got to the apartment, the caller pointed out a flight of stairs that led to the roof.

Sharpe said that when the officer reached the top of the stairs, he saw a man and a young child sitting on a couch.

"The man had his pants down and the child was partially nude," he said. "His left hand was on her back and his right hand was on her thigh, near her groin."

The officer ordered the man to his feet at once, Sharpe said.

"At first he complies, and then at once he charges the officer and knocks him off his feet," Sharpe said.

The struggle between the officer and the man became perilous as they neared the edge of the roof, as there was about a 10-foot drop to the pavement below, he said.

"The officer believes (the man) intentionally tried to shove him off the roof," Sharpe said.

As the fight continued, the officer managed to grab his Taser and fired at the man, but one of the probes missed. Sharpe said the man was able to break free from the officer, knocked over the caller and ran down the steps.

A person who was on a ride- along with the officer was able to put the man into a bear hug before he could run away.

The officer, who lost his flashlight and handcuffs during the struggle, ran to the aid of the person who grabbed the suspect.

Sharpe said the man continued to struggle and swear, but the two were able to hold him until other officers arrived.

"So now, they get him into custody and the victim has run away. She just vanishes," he said.

With the man taken in for questioning, other departments aided South Lyon police in a door-to-door search for the girl.

After looking for two hours, an officer recognizes the girl, who answers her front door.

"Officers awake the parents and explain why they are there," Sharpe said. "They have no idea what has occurred and the parents don't know the suspect or have ever seen him."



The girl, who is 8 years old, was taken to a nearby hospital, where a rape kit was administered. Investigators were awaiting the results, as of Saturday afternoon.

The girl did mention to police she remembered falling asleep on a couch inside her home, but then woke up outside and was being carried from her house, Sharpe said.

Sharpe said police could be charging the man with home invasion, kidnapping and assault with intent to do great bodily harm to an officer.

He will also be charged with criminal sexual conduct, but it is unknown to what degree, and should be arraigned on Monday, Sharpe said.

"We believe he is staying somewhere locally," he said. "We don't buy his Cleveland, Ohio, story. But he does have reasonably outstanding felony warrants out of Cleveland, because we have been in touch with Cleveland police."

Contact Shaun Byron at (248) 745-4685 or send e-mail to shaun.byron@oakpress.com  
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7-year-old tells of abduction attempt

Monday, May 07, 2007

By Shandra Martinez

The Grand Rapids Press

PARK TOWNSHIP -- Abrasions cover Kayli DeLeon's face from chin to forehead and a front tooth is loose, evidence of how close police believe the 7-year-old Park Township girl came to being abducted from her garage Sunday evening.

The Ottawa County Sheriff Department is giving priority to finding her would-be abductor, whom she described as a man in his 20s.

"We are taking this very seriously," Sgt. Robert Ruster said. "We really feel it was an attempted abduction here. We get suspicious calls and vehicles all the time, but an actual confirmed abduction attempt is rare."

Barbara DeLeon, the girl's mother, said their youngest daughter was outside their home fewer than 15 minutes when her husband, Jose DeLeon, heard her screaming.

Police say the girl reported going outside after dinner at 6:15 p.m. to see if other children in the neighborhood were out playing, then returned home when she couldn't find anyone. The girl said she was putting her bike away when the stranger grabbed her, pulled her into the garage and tied her up in a lifejacket lying nearby, police said.

"She screamed and he pushed her on the ground and left," said Barbara DeLeon, 45. "She was shaking when she came upstairs. She was scared."

At first, Kayli told her parents it was a boy who tied her up, initially making them think it was a neighbor boy. A

SEE ATTEMPT, A2

CONTINUED FROM A1

few minutes later, she explained "it was a big boy and he drove away."

"This is a person who had to have been watching," Barbara DeLeon said. "There are very few times when the kids are out when an adult isn't out watching."

Kayli, a first-grader at Waukazoo Elementary, will not be in class today. Instead, she will be meeting with forensics officers as they try to help her put together a more detailed description of her would-be abductor and the vehicle he was driving.

The family moved into the Amber Woods condominium development on 152nd Street in February, across from Park Township Hall and the township airport.

Other parents of Waukazoo students said they were disturbed by the reported assault.

"I can't believe that would happen at someone's home," said Douglas Reiner, adding he hopes West Ottawa school officials keep a close eye on children at Waukazoo Elementary.

Reiner said the incident hit home because his daughter, a Waukazoo student, reported a suspicious incident earlier this year. She was on the school's baseball field when a man approached from beyond a fence and said something to her.

"At the time, we wanted more parents out there to watch the kids at recess and keep them away from the fence," Reiner said.

Don't hesitate to call

With the warm weather drawing children outdoors to play, Ruster urges parents "to watch your kids and keep them close. Don't be shy about calling the police on suspicious people or vehicles."

What makes Kayli's attempted abduction unusual is that she was at home, police said. Usually, abductions occur while children are walking home or in an area away from their homes, Ruster said.

"Most abductions are in a suspect's safety zone or (in an area) that gives the suspect the advantage," he said.

-- Press staff writer John Tunison contributed to this story.

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the SOURCE

Girl defends mother in sexual assault exam

By CHRIS WILLIAMS
Source Staff Writer

Preliminary examination began April 30 for a Utica resident charged with allowing her 14-year-old daughter to have sex with two 21-year-old men.

Tammy Fennell, 35, was charged with one count of second-degree child abuse in April after Child Protective Services alerted Utica police that her daughter, whose name has been withheld, was pregnant and that the father was allegedly 21-year-old Christopher Garcia. Prosecutors and Utica police contend that Fennell was aware of her daughter's year-long relationship with Garcia and his friend, James Przeadski.

"She put her daughter in harm's way," said Macomb County Assistant Prosecutor Molly Zappitell. "It's just really putting your daughter in a position to fail."

Taking the stand as a witness for the prosecution, the daughter claimed that she snuck Garcia into the home and that her mother had no knowledge of the relationship. Zappitell contends that while the case is circumstantial, she strongly believes Fennell was aware of what was happening between her daughter and Garcia, who allegedly lived at the home.

"It was a year-long relationship," Zappitell said. "When you bring a 21-year-old boy around the house, it ought to ring a few bells that something's going on that is more than friends."

The teenager became the subject of national headlines less than a year ago when she was found with a 25-year-old man from Indiana she had met after posing as an 18-year-old on the popular MySpace Web site. Fennell was also found to have a MySpace site that bragged about her hard-partying lifestyle.

Zappitell said Fennell was informed March 17 that her daughter had had an encounter with police up north and that the man she was with, Garcia, was a sex offender. Even at that point, Garcia continued to stay with the family, Zappitell said.

"Our understanding is that he stayed with them for four to five days after (Fennell) learned he was a sex offender," she said.

On the stand, the daughter also testified that she had been pregnant with Przeadski's child last summer and that she is now two months pregnant with Garcia's child.

Normally, Zappitell said, prosecutors do not press charges against mothers in cases similar to this. However, with the daughter's known history with older men, the resulting pregnancy and the fact that the relationship continued for a year, she said prosecutors felt that it was the right thing to charge Fennell with child abuse.

At the examination, District Judge Douglas P. Shepherd reduced Fennell's bond to a personal bond and released her on the condition that she have no contact with her daughter, who is currently in foster care. The examination was adjourned until May 24. If found guilty, Fennell could face 15 years in prison.

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Mother Tries To Sell Own Children For Sex

May 7, 2007 09:37 AM EDT



(TV-5) -- A mother accused of offering up her children for sex was in the courtroom on May 4th. TV-5 has learned the mother tried selling her children to multiple people, including a Saginaw man.

The mother allegedly made arrangements to have her seven-year-old daughter photographed and sexually abused. Her plan was busted after corresponding with an undercover officer.



"The chats were among some of the worst that we have seen but this is the nature of the business, the nature of child sexual abuse," said Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Keith Clark. "It's never easy to talk about child sexual abuse."

In court - police revealed shocking details of their interrogation.

Cpl. William Liczbimski of the Wayne County Sheriff's Department testified: "Did you make arrangements to take your

daughter, your seven-year-old-daughter, to the Best Western on March 30, 2007? And she said yes."

"Did you discuss taking sexually explicit photos of your daughter for money? And she said yes."

Now the department is seeking additional charges, as e-mails have been uncovered between the mother and a Saginaw man. It appears the local man was also making arrangements to have sex with her three children.

The emails between the two are so graphic we've scaled them back.

THE DEFENDANT ASKED: Which one do you want? The 11, 7 or 6-year-old?

SAGINAW MAN REPLIED: Which one do you want me to ****?

DEFENDANT: They can all take turns

SAGINAW MAN: Will they go for it?

DEFENDANT: They will do what we say - start with the oldest.

The Saginaw man has not been identified and Michigan State Police are now handling part of the investigation. Meanwhile, the mother is behind bars on a million dollar bond.



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Daycare Owner Charged With CSC

May 4, 2007 03:25 PM EDT

(TV-5) -- The defense for a man charged with second degree criminal sexual conduct has asked for more time.

The local daycare owner, Jerry Anderson, has been charged for allegedly sexually abusing a four-year-old child in his care. The abuse allegedly occurred in Grand Blanc and stems back to late 2005.

Anderson was scheduled for court today but has been moved to next week.

A person who worked there alerted authorities to the suspected abuse. The daycare has been shut down.

He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted.



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State revokes facility license

Day care center closed; owner's husband charged with fondling child

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, May 05, 2007

By Paul Janczewski and Kim Crawford

Journal Staff Writers

GRAND BLANC TWP. - A state bureau overseeing day care centers has revoked the license of a Grand Blanc Township facility amid allegations the owner's husband molested a 4-year-old boy there.

A spokesman for the office of Children and Adult Licensing, which works under the auspices of the state Department of Human Services, said the license for Manny's House was revoked April 26.

The revocation came a day after Grand Blanc Township police received a complaint from a mother who said her son, 4, was sexually molested there.

Manny's House, 7377 Porter Road, is also the residence of Jerry L. Anderson, 61, who is charged with second-degree criminal sexual conduct with a person under age 13, a 15-year felony.

Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton said the charges arose when the victim's mother filed a complaint with police April 25.

Leyton said the mother received a call earlier from a DHS official, who told her an employee of the day care reported that her son possibly had been molested.

The allegations were that Anderson touched or fondled her son, Leyton said.

Leyton said he is the husband of the woman who runs the day care center from their home, but her name was not available.

"This investigation is not over," Leyton said. "We have received other complaints and are investigating those."

As a result of the investigation initiated on April 24, the owner agreed to the revocation of her state child license, said Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the state Department of Human Services. The owner formally agreed to close down two days later, Sorbet said.

Anderson is free on a \$20,000 cash bond.

A pretrial hearing is scheduled for Tuesday.

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Alleged abuser could lose child care license

LAPEER CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, May 05, 2007

By James L. Smith

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LAPEER - A woman who allegedly forced a mentally challenged adult to stand outside in the cold for wetting his pants could lose her child care license.

Abuse charges against Linda Haney raise concerns that she lacks moral character to run a child care center, state officials said. Haney faces a preliminary exam at 1:30 p.m. May 21 before District Judge John T. Connolly on misdemeanor charges of abusing a vulnerable adult in the third degree and a fourth-degree charge of causing physical harm to a vulnerable adult by improper care.

The third-degree charge carries a maximum 2-year prison term and the second charge carries a maximum 1-year term.

Haney, 56, formerly operated the Grand Haven Manor adult foster care facility at 6853 Klam Road and currently operates Imagination Island, a licensed child day care center at 1665 N. Saginaw St. in Mayfield Township.

According to records obtained from the Department of Human Services, Haney closed Grand Haven Manor in April.

In late April, the DHS sent Haney a letter advising her of the intent to revoke her child care license at Imagination Island. Haney has 30 days to file an appeal of that decision.

A woman answering the phone at the child care center Friday said Haney was not there.

Defense attorney Ramsey Mashni, who represents Haney in the criminal case, said Haney denies the abuse allegations, but declined to comment further.

The Lapeer County prosecutor's office said charges were filed after state police Trooper Steven Kramer was called to the adult care home on Jan. 11 to investigate a complaint filed by Lapeer County Community Mental Health and DHS.

A 58-year-old man reportedly was left outside for an hour in the cold as punishment for wetting his pants.

While out in the cold he fell and injured himself, said Lapeer County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Michael Hodges.

The man also alleged that bruises he had were caused from being hit by Haney.

A DHS licensing consultant reported: "This resident showed indications of inadequate care, including very poor hygiene; strong body odor; unshaven face; long, dirty fingernails and disheveled, smelly clothing."

The licensing consultant also reported: "During the AFC licensing investigation other residents confirmed that Ms. Haney hit Resident 1, made him go outside in cold weather when he soiled his pants, and often

QUICK TAKE

Imagination Island

The Department of Human Services is in the process of revoking the license of the Imagination Island day care center at 1665 N. Saginaw St. in Mayfield Township.

When the center's license was renewed in August 2005, the state noted that the business served 81 children, had 12 employees and had complied with all state rules and regulations for day care centers.

yelled at all of them using profanity when they had not completed tasks or behaved as she demanded."

The DHS noted that the abuse charges raised concerns that Haney "lacks the good moral character required to operate a child care center," and on Feb. 2 and Feb. 13 DHS made unannounced visits to Haney's child care facility in Lapeer.

Other violations noted there: the lack of a qualified program director; allowing employees to smoke on the property; a young boy sitting alone in a closed room with no supervision; an unsupervised young girl in a nap room playing with an uncovered electrical plug; sleeping cots arranged too close together; a trampoline, which is prohibited under state rules, in a room accessible to children; uninspected electrical service to the employees' smoking shed; and a parrot in the dining area.

The March 7 DHS conclusion of the two visits was that the child care license should be revoked.

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Foster families thrive with help

May 6, 2007

BY DANIEL J. WRIGHT

In a February editorial on the serious issues facing the state's foster care system, the Free Press concluded "everyone -- whether touched by the system or not -- can do a little something." I couldn't agree more, and a successful program of the Lenawee County Foster and Adoptive Parent Association is proof that there are ways to engage people.

The LCFAPA program is based on the Family to Family initiative, which has been tested across the country in settings that range from rural communities to densely populated cities. Family to Family programs are driven by four key principles: active recruitment of potential foster parents, including relatives; community partnerships; team decision-making with foster parents, case workers, biological families and others in the community; and frequent self-evaluation.

This approach recognizes that children are best raised by families, not by caseworkers.

Aggressive recruiting of potential foster and adoptive parents is a key feature. Having more potential foster parents to choose from increases the likelihood of a good fit between foster child and foster parent. Also, having more foster homes lessens the load for individual foster parents, while freeing up more of their time to share their experience through mentoring potential foster and adoptive parents.

Community events, such as "Kick It Up for Kids," generate inquiries from potential foster parents. A collaboration of LCFAPA with local Wendy's restaurants, "Kick It Up for Kids" raises money for the children, who need such basics as beds and clothing when joining a new family. More important, it generates calls to a toll-free number -- publicized as part of the campaign -- for potential foster and adoptive parents. Calls are answered by an experienced foster parent who sets up the caller with a foster parent agency right away, plus there are follow-up calls with invitations to LCFAPA's monthly meetings.

During these informal events, potential parents hear foster and adoptive parents discuss the challenges --and great rewards -- of creating a stable, loving home for a foster child. They also get to know the support systems for foster and adoptive parents, including other families, churches, and community groups.

At other informal LCFAPA events, such as picnics, family dinners, bowling outings and camping trips, potential parents meet foster and adoptive families in a relaxed setting. They can observe and get to know local foster children without pressure and without the child risking rejection. And when someone does take a child into his or her home, the process doesn't end. LCFAPA members serve as mentors and support system. As LCFAPA President Molly Armstrong says, "Caseworkers are available from 8 to 5. We're available 24/7. And while we don't offer miracles, we will help you get through."

The LCFAPA program holds great promise for other Michigan communities. The basic principles, including active recruiting and ongoing support, are essential no matter the setting.

Lest anyone think that there isn't a sizable pool of potential parents, here's a statistic: Research done by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption indicates that 40% of Americans have considered adopting and that 64% have had a close personal relationship with adoption. Our challenge, and our goal, must be to get those people to pick up the phone - and make all the difference in the world to a child.

DANIEL J. WRIGHT is director of the Family Services Division of the State Court Administrative Office.

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Muskegon Chronicle

Nurses trained for pediatric sex abuse exams

Monday, May 07, 2007

By Marla Miller

mmiller@muskegonchronicle.com

plastic tote filled with stuffed animals has become part of the furnishings in an emergency department exam room at Gerber Memorial Health Services.

Colorful, youthful decorations will soon add some cheer to the stark, white walls -- all in an effort to comfort the kids brought there for the most sensitive of situations.

The four nurses with access would rather keep the lights off and door locked. But the need for the room -- to examine sexual assault victims -- is a reality. Since fall 2005, they have handled 51 reported rapes or sexual assaults, and 22 of those have involved children under age 14, said Debra Hogue, a registered nurse and certified sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE).

Sexual assault is the most under-reported, serious crime in the country, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Although the SANE program, begun 30 years ago, has been launched in more than 600 county, city and hospital programs, (including Mercy General Health Partners and Hackley Hospital) that still leaves thousands of hospitals without the service.

In addition, the ability to prosecute sex crimes rests heavily on evidence collected at the hospital, especially when the alleged victim is a child. Gerber Memorial's emergency department has responded by sending four nurses for special training and certification in the collection of "forensic" evidence from adults. They also have completed pediatric training and plan to take the certification exam this fall.

"We were uncomfortable as ER nurses handling rape cases, especially with the number of kids that came in needing exams," Hogue said. "We had no place to send these kids. To ask them to wait two weeks didn't seem fair."

Physical and sexual abuse is a terrifying crime for its victims, especially since most know their attackers. Beyond the event itself, the emotional and mental trauma lingers for years after physical abuse reminders have scarred over or healed. If the survivor is a child, and if not treated quickly and properly by certified medical staff, the crippling effects and fears set in and only deepen with time, according to a Gerber press release.

Typically, an adult or child who has been raped will be seen in the hospital emergency room by a resident on call, or nurses who have had little to no forensic training and know nothing about testifying in court. Because emergency departments triage patients, and take the gravely ill and injured first, many victims wait for hours, unable to change clothes, shower, use the toilet or brush their teeth for fear of destroying incriminating evidence.

SANE available 24/7

At Fremont's Gerber hospital, the SANE clinicians -- part medical professional, part investigator -- give victims of sexual violence immediate attention. They all carry pagers and are on call 24 hours every day. The average response time is 30 minutes on the rare occasion none of them are working.

A dedicated SANE room, private and comfortable, is used only for examinations and houses a locked cabinet with victims' files. The nurses explain their role and the process so the patient understands fully what will happen.

"The SANE knows exactly what to look for and how to go about an examination with as little emotional

stress as possible to the patient. Many of the patients are in shock when they come to the ED," said Peggy Muckey, GMHS clinical coordinator for the emergency room.

"They feel overwhelmed and afraid, and it's our role to provide a comfortable and safe environment in which they can be examined."

Gerber ER nurses James Bearup, Amy Kurnat, Laurie Higgins and Hogue became SANE clinicians and certified forensic examiners for adults first. They attended 40 hours of classroom instruction in Detroit, then returned home for 60 hours of clinical experience that included riding with police, spending time in court, visiting the state crime lab and working with advocacy groups.

"This training was very in-depth for us because it's stuff we've never really done before," Hogue said. "When someone comes in, you grab this kit put together by state police department, open it up and have all these forms you've never seen before."

Bearup decided to pursue the specialty training because he has an interest in forensics.

"If a woman or child comes in, who better to say 'this is not your fault' than a man," he said. "When I go and talk to a female patient, I will always ask them 'Do you want someone in here?' "

Each became members of the International Association of Forensic Nurses and passed the certified forensic test for adult victims in fall 2005. The test's scenario-based questions covered proper examination of the survivor, proper documentation of the evidence, correct medical care and sequencing of that care, retrieval of samples for evidence and follow-up patient procedures.

Pediatric cases take two

Gerber's SANEs have completed the same classroom and clinical requirements for the pediatric program, which is so new that a certification exam to demonstrate competency is just being introduced. The first test will be offered this month. Gerber's nurses plan to take the pediatric exam while attending a conference in October.

The pediatric approach differs in that it takes two SANEs to examine and calm a child, all the while gaining trust, moving at a slow pace and gauging the child's comfort level and fear. They use stuffed animals and cartoon talk to build rapport.

"To do a proper exam, it takes time," Higgins said. "Sometimes with children we take four to six hours."

Initially, Higgins was hesitant to examine young victims.

"I know they are crying out for help and people turn their back," she said. "It happens in the nicest families, the richest families, the poorest families."

Besides dedicating an examination room, Gerber Memorial invested in a \$27,000 magnifying and camera device called a culposcope to look for microscopic injuries. The exam process can be awkward, but SANEs are trained to put the patient at ease.

They may comb the hair on the patient's head, arms or pubic area, looking for evidence such as fibers, body fluids and hair not belonging to the victim. They swab parts of the body where an attacker may have left behind DNA and collect cultures for the state police's Rape Kit, which will ultimately be used to confirm an attacker's identity and pursue prosecution.

Finally, the patient is provided a toiletry kit with which to clean up, and counseling with a rape-crisis advocate is offered.

As health care providers, they must stay as unbiased as possible. They cannot ask leading questions. Rather, their focus is on the collection of medical data, Hogue said.

Impact on justice system

Gerber Memorial's vision for this program is to become the resource center for investigation, treatment and prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault for Newaygo County and its surrounding area, according to Marianne Patten, a registered nurse and director for emergency services.

The hospital's SANE program has seen a 38.7 percent increase in reported and treated cases from 2005 to

2006, and 16 percent of this increase has been directly related to an increase in reported and treated pediatric cases, Patten said.

Gerber's SANEs have educated local physicians, law enforcement, child protective services and other advocacy organizations on their special training. More and more victims are being referred from those groups and from as far away as Big Rapids, Bearup said.

What sets Gerber's program apart is that its SANE nurses can testify as expert witnesses since they've been trained and certified in the collection of forensic evidence such as bite marks and lacerations. The nurses have been subpoenaed several times, but none of the cases have gone to court.

The impact is hard to measure, but Bearup believes their work is making a difference. Some perpetrators plead guilty before trial. In other instances, charges are dropped due to finding a lack of evidence or false allegations.

"That's the other side of the story, that there was nothing going on," he said. "We're one part of a very important wheel."

Sexual assault stats

* Sexual assault is the most under-reported, serious crime in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

* 1 in 6 women, and 1 in 33 men in the U.S. have been victims of rape during their lifetime.

* 8 of 10 victims knew their attackers.

* In the first nine months of 2006, Gerber Memorial Health Services' sexual assault nurse examiners handled 39 sexual assault cases. The ages of survivors ranged from 8 months to 69 years. One-third of the survivors were under age 14.

* About one-third of an estimated 260,000 nationwide victims each year file reports, while untold numbers are reluctant to seek medical help.

* When victims do press charges, more than half the cases end up stalled because there's no evidence, bad evidence, or no money to analyze the evidence.

Source: Gerber Memorial Health Services

SANE clinicians attended 40 hours of classroom instruction in Detroit, then returned home for 60 hours of clinical experience that included riding with police, spending time in court, visiting the state crime lab and working with advocacy groups. w

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Foster families thrive with help

May 6, 2007

BY DANIEL J. WRIGHT

In a February editorial on the serious issues facing the state's foster care system, the Free Press concluded "everyone -- whether touched by the system or not -- can do a little something." I couldn't agree more, and a successful program of the Lenawee County Foster and Adoptive Parent Association is proof that there are ways to engage people.

The LCFAPA program is based on the Family to Family initiative, which has been tested across the country in settings that range from rural communities to densely populated cities. Family to Family programs are driven by four key principles: active recruitment of potential foster parents, including relatives; community partnerships; team decision-making with foster parents, case workers, biological families and others in the community; and frequent self-evaluation.

This approach recognizes that children are best raised by families, not by caseworkers.

Aggressive recruiting of potential foster and adoptive parents is a key feature. Having more potential foster parents to choose from increases the likelihood of a good fit between foster child and foster parent. Also, having more foster homes lessens the load for individual foster parents, while freeing up more of their time to share their experience through mentoring potential foster and adoptive parents.

Community events, such as "Kick It Up for Kids," generate inquiries from potential foster parents. A collaboration of LCFAPA with local Wendy's restaurants, "Kick It Up for Kids" raises money for the children, who need such basics as beds and clothing when joining a new family. More important, it generates calls to a toll-free number -- publicized as part of the campaign -- for potential foster and adoptive parents. Calls are answered by an experienced foster parent who sets up the caller with a foster parent agency right away, plus there are follow-up calls with invitations to LCFAPA's monthly meetings.

During these informal events, potential parents hear foster and adoptive parents discuss the challenges --and great rewards -- of creating a stable, loving home for a foster child. They also get to know the support systems for foster and adoptive parents, including other families, churches, and community groups.

At other informal LCFAPA events, such as picnics, family dinners, bowling outings and camping trips, potential parents meet foster and adoptive families in a relaxed setting. They can observe and get to know local foster children without pressure and without the child risking rejection. And when someone does take a child into his or her home, the process doesn't end. LCFAPA members serve as mentors and support system. As LCFAPA President Molly Armstrong says, "Caseworkers are available from 8 to 5. We're available 24/7. And while we don't offer miracles, we will help you get through."

The LCFAPA program holds great promise for other Michigan communities. The basic principles, including active recruiting and ongoing support, are essential no matter the setting.

Lest anyone think that there isn't a sizable pool of potential parents, here's a statistic: Research done by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption indicates that 40% of Americans have considered adopting and that 64% have had a close personal relationship with adoption. Our challenge, and our goal, must be to get those people to pick up the phone - and make all the difference in the world to a child.

DANIEL J. WRIGHT is director of the Family Services Division of the State Court Administrative Office.

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Children need help from Congress

May 6, 2007

BY J.J. HITCH

I'll never forget the conversation when Children's Protective Services was called in to take care of my two younger brothers, my younger sister and me. The social worker told us that if we couldn't live with our grandparents, we would be split up across Michigan in group homes, foster homes, or basically anywhere they could find room.

Far too many children living in foster care are separated from family, friends, everything they know. Although foster care is intended to be temporary, the 19,000 Michigan children currently in foster care will remain in the system for an average of two years and move at least three times.

My sister and brothers and I were more fortunate. Our grandparents stepped up to care for us. Across the nation, many foster children, including almost 30% in Michigan, live with grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives.

Taking four kids in at ages 72 and 62 wasn't easy for my grandparents. Despite financial difficulties and life changes, though, my grandparents gave us the permanent, loving home we needed.

Many other foster children in Michigan, for whom reunification with their parents or adoption are not possible, find permanency with relatives through legal guardianship. Yet federal foster care funds that made the difference for my grandparents cannot currently be used to support foster children living with relatives who become legal guardians.

Recently, I joined former foster youths from 21 states for a Washington, D.C., event calling for reform of foster care. The event was sponsored by Kids Are Waiting: Fix Foster Care Now, a project of the Pew Charitable Trusts. We wanted to let Congress know how important it is that they reform the system. We wanted to tell our elected officials we have waited too long for them to make changes.

The vast majority of children in foster care have siblings, and studies show as many as 75% have been separated from their brothers and sisters. If Congress provided more flexible and reliable funding, it might mean more support for programs like drug treatment or housing that could keep families together and prevent children from entering foster care or reduce the time they spend there. Or it might mean funding to provide support for relatives who become their guardians.

More than half a million foster children nationwide are waiting to join a permanent, loving family like my brothers and sister and I have. They have waited long enough.

J.J. HITCH is a former foster youth who is now a sophomore at Oakland University.

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The Unkindest Cuts

Foster care, already in crisis, can't take any more trims

May 6, 2007

If Gov. Jennifer Granholm and the Legislature resolve nothing else in the critical days ahead, they ought to be able to agree that one state responsibility, the foster care system, is off the table. That means no cuts in the reimbursement rates for foster families and service agencies and no layoffs that affect the 700-800 state workers in the foster care system. In an ideal world, the state would actually invest more in foster care, which serves 19,000 children. But given the current budget constraints, the best that can be expected is to maintain the system.

It would be dangerous, immoral and far more expensive down the road to do anything less.

These children are the state's responsibility. They were removed from abuse or neglect in their homes to make their lives better; things don't always work out that way for them. Only about 2,600 were adopted last year and another 536 turned 18 and "aged out" of the system, entering a netherworld between childhood and adulthood with precious little in the way of a family safety net that other young people take for granted. The state already faces a federal lawsuit over the way it runs its foster care system. Scaling back now would only invite a judicial takeover and very likely additional mandated costs.

But fundamentally, and unlike other aspects of the budget debate, this is not about serving any special interest. This is about the State of Michigan living up to its responsibility for these unfortunate children. If they ended up in foster care, their lives were not exactly peachy before. The state can see to their needs now, or very likely support them later in its welfare or prison systems.

It seems inevitable that finances will force the state to cut aid to its K-12 schools. But even with less from Lansing, most students are facing life from a far better place than those in foster care.

After agreeing to keep money for the foster care system intact, Granholm and the Legislature can then be about fixing it, notably by modifying well-intentioned 1997 laws that in practice have been too effective at permanently cutting off foster kids from their birth families. The laws have more than doubled, to about 1,600, the number of "legal orphans" in Michigan -- children removed from their families but who have little hope of ever being adopted.

The state needs more options for these kids, including a form of legal guardianship that would enable them to maintain family ties while growing up outside their parents' homes.

But the first obligation is protection. And that starts with protecting the foster care system from cuts.

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Troubled childhood led to prison

Sunday, May 06, 2007

THE SAGINAW NEWS

A Saginaw man who spent his childhood moving from one foster home to another has received his punishment for trying to rob a drug dealer.

Shelton D. Dawkins, 22, of 1309 Randolph learned Thursday he will spend the next 17 years and four months to 60 years in prison for armed robbery of Scott R. Kinsman, carrying a dangerous weapon with unlawful intent, possessing a firearm as a felon and possessing a firearm while committing a felony-second offense.

Saginaw County Circuit Judge William A. Crane gave Dawkins credit for 371 days he spent in jail.

Dawkins, who pleaded guilty, has a previous conviction for first-degree home invasion and possessing a firearm while committing a felony.

In May 2006, The Saginaw News featured Dawkins in a report on the turmoil foster children face.

Dawkins suffered three gunshot wounds to the chest during the April 20, 2006, incident at a duplex at 2214 Bay.

Kinsman testified in a previous hearing that he had planned to sell a half-pound of marijuana for \$775 to a man who contacted him.

The buyer arrived at the duplex with three other men, Kinsman said. One of the men wanted to see the drugs and weigh them, Kinsman told authorities. The men didn't want to pay \$775, so Kinsman said he agreed to sell it for \$760.

Minutes later, Kinsman said he "heard a loud thud," and he and another man tried to close the door.

A gunman appeared and fired at least two shots, he said. Kinsman said he pulled a pistol from his pocket and fired his .40-caliber handgun through a glass window.

Kinsman said he suffered a gunshot wound to his left arm.

Police said Dawkins had a .22-caliber pistol.

Last month, Chief Circuit Judge Robert L. Kaczmarek sentenced Kinsman, 20, of 4574 Hepburn to three years of probation for delivering marijuana, conspiring to commit that crime, carrying a concealed weapon and carrying a dangerous weapon with unlawful intent. Kinsman pleaded guilty. v

Darryl Q. Tucker covers courts for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9686.

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Adoption heartache leads to charges

Agency made empty promises, left empty arms, couples say

May 5, 2007

BY STEVE NEAVLING and DAN CORTEZ

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Jamyson was going to be the first child for Amanda and Reece Heinrich, and they prepared as any expecting couple would.

Amanda painted nature-themed murals on the walls of the nursery. A friend built a rocker engraved with Jamyson's name. And since they were adopting, photographs of Jamyson were tucked in their wallets, displayed on their walls and proudly handed out to friends.

"We just wanted somebody to call us Mom and Dad," Amanda Heinrich, 39, of Holt, said Friday.

But the child never came.

The Heinrichs and at least five other couples, including one other in Michigan, were swindled out of up to \$30,000 apiece for Guatemalan babies through Waiting Angels Adoption Agency of Macomb Township, according to Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox. The agency, Cox says, preyed on vulnerable couples by promising to arrange adoptions that never happened.

More victims may emerge, prosecutors said.

The agency's owners, Simone Boraggina, 40, of Macomb Township and Joseph Beauvais, 44, of Novi, were arraigned Thursday in 41A District Court in Shelby Township on felony counts of racketeering and tax fraud. Police seized \$523,700 from safety deposit boxes in the owners' homes -- money prosecutors believe the pair bilked from couples who wanted to become adoptive parents.

The owners were released on a \$250,000 bond and face up to 20 years in prison if convicted. Their attorney didn't return calls seeking comment.

"The defendants took advantage of the emotional connection that people invest in the adoption process in order to obtain money without ever delivering services," Cox spokesman Matt Frendewey said. "The prospective parents were given excuse after excuse."

Cox alleges the agency strung along the couples since 2005, blaming paperwork and the Guatemalan government on persistent delays in the adoption process.

The owners "are predators," said attorney Joni Marie Fixel of East Lansing, who represents the Holt couple. "I don't know who is more vulnerable than people who want to be parents. It breaks my heart."

The Michigan couples and four others in Minnesota, Alabama, California and New York filed a civil suit against the agency's operators in October 2006, but the case is on hold pending criminal proceedings.

The Heinrichs found the agency online and began the adoption process in March 2005. They chose the agency because they wanted a Guatemalan baby and thought they'd have a smoother adoption with a local company.

There were phone calls and e-mails, but the couple never met the owners. In June 2005, they used a home equity loan to wire the agency \$12,000. Communication slowed.

By December 2006, after they had spent more than \$23,000, they again were told they'd have

to wait. They became suspicious and started researching the company online. That's when they found someone who'd used the agency and had similar problems.

Now, with no baby, the nursery the Heinrichs labored over sits unused behind a door that they don't plan to reopen.

"It's really hard to trust anybody," Amanda Heinrich said. "It's changed us as people."

Couples who think they've been scammed can call the Attorney General's Office at 877-765-8388.

Contact **STEVE NEAVLING** at 586-469-4935 or sneavling@freepress.com.

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Community input sought on fighting juvenile crime

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

GENESEE TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, May 05, 2007

By George Jaksa

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GENESEE TWP. - Area residents have been invited to a meeting 6-8:30 p.m. Monday in the Odis Floyd Community Center of New Jerusalem Full Gospel Baptist Church, 1035 E. Carpenter Road, to discuss ways to reduce juvenile crimes locally.

Toni K. Adams, project manager of Community Outreach for Family and Youth, said the community summit will focus on educating youths in crime prevention and rehabilitating juveniles who have been involved in criminal offenses. She said the objective is to instill confidence and build self-esteem and family values while exploring employment possibilities for the youths.

Adams said her group has received a planning grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to research and implement solutions to juvenile crime in Flint, the Mt. Morris area, the Beecher District and Genesee Township.

- George Jaksa

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Article published May 7, 2007

Police: Daughter ran over, killed mom after argument

Free Press

Bloomfield Township police are investigating an incident in which a woman was killed after her daughter reportedly ran over her with a vehicle this morning after a family altercation.

Police said the incident happened around 1 a.m. at a home in the 12000 block of Lenox. Police said the daughter tried to leave the home after her parents got into an argument.

At some point, they said, the woman's parents tried to stop her from leaving, and the mother was hit by the vehicle.

She was taken a hospital, where she died.

Police have not released the names or ages of the individuals involved.

Domestic Violence Victims Get Help

By ANDREW LERSTEN
H-P South Haven Bureau

May 7, 2007

PAW PAW — Linda Reyna had only been married for four months when her husband gave her a black eye.

Many more were to follow.

For seven years, Reyna endured an abusive marriage in Alabama characterized by a cycle of abuse, violence and then compensatory periods of doting tenderness from her husband. But after he raped her violently in front of their 3-year-old daughter one day in 1999, she decided she'd had enough. She escaped only after he dragged her by the hair and cracked her ribs. She managed to make it to a neighbor's house.

A domestic violence organization put her and her daughter up at a safe house for two weeks until a judge granted a personal protection order against her husband. She went back to her house, packed and headed north in a rented U-Haultruck.

She didn't know where she and her daughter were going.

She only knew she was driving north.

"It was my independence



John Madill / H-P staff

THE VAN BUREN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COALITION last month held a rally and the Take Back The Night 2007 march in Bangor. The purpose of the event was to make communities aware of the coalition's services to help victims of sexual assault.

day," she said. Ironically, it was July 4.

More than 13 hours later, exhausted, Reyna stopped in Portage, Mich. Her ordeal was over, though the divorce and custody battle played out over another four years.

"Now that I look back on it, I can see the warning signs (that he showed)," said Reyna, now a board member of the Van Buren County Domestic Violence Coalition and an emergency room nurse at Lakeview Hospital in Paw Paw.

“He was very jealous and demanding of my time,” Reyna said. “I really didn’t recognize a lot of the signs and symptoms at the time.”

As a domestic abuse victim, Reyna – who has remarried – knows firsthand how important an organization like the Van Buren County Domestic Violence Coalition can be. “If it weren’t for programs like these ... that can be the difference between someone being a victim or having a victory,” Reyna said. “I am very proud of (the coalition). I think the work they’re doing is headed in the right direction. What one person can do alone is magnified by a group’s efforts.”

Statistics dramatically show the severity of domestic violence as a social issue. According to the Michigan Resource Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, one out of four women in a survey said they had been raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, date or cohabitating spouse.

Van Buren Domestic Violence Coalition Director Deb Niebor said the coalition helped 275 women last year. The coalition helps place women who are victims of domestic violence in short-term housing, such as in shelters in Three Rivers, Kalamazoo or Benton Harbor.

Its \$150,000 annual budget is covered by federal and state sources, the Van Buren County Child Abuse and Neglect Council, corporate sponsors and foundations, and annual fund-raisers, Niebor said.

The coalition has several specialized advocacy and education programs. The advocacy programs help women through the court system, or provide someone who can just listen. The educational programs are designed to raise public awareness of domestic violence. “Education is so key to helping these women,” Reyna said.

One recent educational event was a march and rally in Bangor to raise awareness of sexual assault. Every year the coalition sponsors candlelight vigils to raise awareness of domestic violence.

On June 2, the coalition will host its annual Maggie Coleman Memorial Golf Outing fund-raiser at the Cheshire Hills Golf Course in Allegan County, Niebor said. The event is named in memory of a Paw Paw teenager who was murdered by her boyfriend in 1998.

“It helps promote awareness of dating violence,” Niebor said.

For more information on the event, call the coalition office at (269) 655-9008.



NIEBOR

Domestic violence facts

Domestic violence statistics at a glance:

- ◆ One in four women will experience domestic violence sometime in their lives.
- ◆ In 2001, 20 percent of all violent crime against women was from an intimate partner, such as a husband or boyfriend.
- ◆ An estimated 46 percent of domestic violence goes unreported to police. As much as three-quarters of sexual assault and rape goes unreported to police.

- ◆ Women ages 16-24 as a demographic group experience the highest percentage rate of domestic violence.
- ◆ A 1994 report showed 37 percent of women seeking injury treatment in hospital emergency rooms were domestic violence victims.
- ◆ Women comprised 85 percent of domestic violence victims in 2001.
- ◆ The United States logged 691,710 separate incidents of domestic violence – not resulting in death – in the year 2001.
- ◆ In 1999, 32 percent of all female murder victims were killed by an intimate partner.
- ◆ Domestic violence costs employers up to \$13 billion per year in such areas as lost productivity and increased health care costs.

Source: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

May 7, 2007

In Domestic Abuse, Digital Photos Can Say More Than Victims

By [CARA BUCKLEY](#)

Her body was crisscrossed with his rage. And after she slipped off her clothes, wincing, the police officer photographed every welt. The bruises marbling her upper arm. The places where her skin broke. Her striated back, which looked as if it had been flogged with a cat o' nine tails.

In the first raw hours after the attack, the 39-year-old woman, a mother of five, tearfully told the police that her husband had whipped her with a cable. She would later recant her story, and say she was suffering from a skin condition caused by asbestos, a story that convinced no one.

But the Queens district attorney's office pressed forward with the prosecution anyway, armed with the damning digital photographs. Even though the victim refused to testify, her husband was convicted in 2005 and got a one-year prison term, largely, prosecutors believe, because of the pictures.

Providing digital cameras to the police is revolutionizing the prosecution of domestic violence in New York City, according to district attorneys, victim advocates and forensic technicians.

In Queens, the first borough to use the technology, prosecutors say there has been a notable increase in conviction rates since the police there began taking digital photos at domestic violence scenes about five years ago.

In 2002, the first full year digital cameras were used in Queens, prosecutors saw a spike in felony domestic violence convictions. They said 81 percent of the 474 felony domestic violence cases resulted in convictions, compared with 52 percent of the 437 domestic violence cases in 2000, when the police still used Polaroids, which yielded poorer quality, darker, grainy images that tended to fade.

For misdemeanor domestic violence cases, 60 percent of the 3,948 cases ended in convictions in 2002, compared with 51 percent of the 4,013 misdemeanor cases in 2000.

Digital cameras have now been placed in all of the city's 76 precincts and nine public housing police stations; as of last year, there were at least two in each station house, according to Chief Kathy E. Ryan, of the Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit. And although the district attorneys in the other boroughs say they cannot gauge the cameras' effect on conviction rates, either because it is too early or difficult to assess the impact of the cameras alone, they all say digital cameras have vastly improved the way they prosecute domestic violence cases.

"Even if there is an increase in convictions, it doesn't tell us it's because the photographs are so much better," said Penny Santana, chief of the domestic violence bureau for the Bronx district attorney's office. But, she added, the use of digital pictures "has certainly enhanced our prosecution."

For one thing, the cameras capture what Polaroids, and the human eye, often miss. Defensive cuts on an outstretched hand. Bruises on the skin of women with dark complexions. When the pictures are magnified, other wounds appear, like broken capillaries, tiny cuts and jagged flaps of skin.

Police officers can also immediately transmit the pictures, by computer, to a database available to prosecutors citywide. Before, with Polaroids, prosecutors had to subpoena a police officer to take photographs to their office, a process that could drag on for days.

Now, as soon as a photo is uploaded, prosecutors can immediately assess the gravity of the wounds and decide how aggressively to pursue a case. The digitally transmitted pictures are now also available for a defendant's first appearance in court, which experts say is a crucial time in domestic violence cases.

"One of the most serious decisions a judge can take is to set bail instead of sending the person home, where the battery continues," said [Richard A. Brown](#), the Queens district attorney.

In Queens, Scott E. Kessler, who heads the district attorney's domestic violence bureau, has found that when the police take photographs, bail is set in nearly a third of the cases. But without a photo, he said, the figure falls to 14 percent, with the rest of the defendants being released on their own recognizance.

The reason, he says, is the extreme visceral reaction the photos elicit.

"When you're in a front of a judge, you describe the injuries written in the complaint, the bruising, the swelling, the blood," Mr. Kessler said. "But until a person sees another human being with those injuries, with the swelling, the blood, the bruising, it's hard to get that point across."

Mr. Kessler is supporting an effort by City Councilman Eric N. Gioia of Queens for money to be included in the next city budget to have digital cameras put in every patrol car in the city, though Chief Ryan said officers responding to domestic violence calls often bring the precinct's camera with them.

Many police departments nationwide, including those in Los Angeles and Miami, have begun using digital cameras in recent years. Other departments have been slower to embrace the technology, often because they lack the money to buy the equipment or the expertise to start an online database.

For departments that use cameras, there is often lag time before officers get accustomed to them and learn how to take good pictures. In New York, Chief Ryan said officers are starting to catch up with Queens. On average citywide, police are now taking digital pictures in about half of the domestic violence cases they respond to. That was an improvement, she said, from three months ago, when they were being used in just 20 percent of the cases.

Justice John M. Leventhal of State Supreme Court in Brooklyn, the first judge to preside over the nation's first court to handle felony domestic violence cases exclusively, said the images speed up the judicial process. Faced with graphic documentation of the crime, an abuser is often quicker to agree to a plea deal, experts say. Conversely, charges are dropped more quickly if the photographic evidence is scant.

"The cases that should be tried are," Justice Leventhal said. "And the cases that shouldn't won't be."

Victims reluctant to go to a precinct house out of fear or shame may be willing to consent to having their pictures taken. Photos taken at the scene of an attack often paint a fuller picture, capturing smashed furniture, blood on floors or walls, phone cords ripped from their sockets or cellphones snapped in two.

Ward Allen, a forensic imaging consultant with SDFI-Telemedicine, a forensic photography company based in California, said digital photos have also revamped the investigation of sex crimes. Tiny cameras can photograph minuscule internal injuries, he said, and the images can now be sent, securely, virtually anywhere in the world.

The cameras also lift some of the burden of proof from victims, advocates say. Instead of having to testify, photos of wounds, often blown up for the courtroom, can speak for a victim. This has helped prosecutors in what are known as “victimless trials,” in which victims refuse to testify, a common thread in domestic violence cases.

The vast majority of domestic violence victims do not report their injuries, prosecutors say. Of those who do, most later minimize or change their stories, like the woman who was whipped with a cable. The detailed photos, along with the admissibility in court of what are known as “excited utterances,” or what the victim reports to the police immediately after the crime, help a prosecutor’s case.

There has been criticism about trials proceeding without the victim’s consent or against their will. Some believe it makes victims vulnerable to more violence, especially if they stay with their attackers. But others say victimless trials tell offenders that they are still facing legal consequences.

“It sends a message to offenders that that’s a crime, and that it’s going to be pursued no matter what the victim may or may not want,” said Maureen Curtis, senior director of Safe Horizon, the largest crime victims organization in the country.

In Queens, prosecutors are now in the midst of a particularly grisly victimless trial. The attack happened in February, on a darkened street in Springfield Gardens. A 23-year-old woman was repeatedly slashed in the face, and later, hysterical and bleeding profusely, told the police that her husband had attacked her with a razor blade and snatched her baby. The baby was found, and the woman later retracted her story. But the prosecutors had a photo of her taken soon after the attack, staring balefully at the camera, her lip split open, crescents of flesh missing from her left eyelid and cheek.

Her husband was indicted and is now on trial, according to Pamela J. Papish, an assistant district attorney. “Because of photos,” she said.

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ourMidland.com
from the Midland Daily News

05/04/2007

Federal funds available to groups helping with emergency needs

United Way of Midland County announces that local agencies may apply for federal funds to supplement emergency food, shelter and utility programs in Midland County.

These funds are available through the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program in the amount of \$32,982. Funds are not available to individuals.

Under the terms of the grant, local governmental or voluntary organizations chosen to receive funds must be non-profit, have an accounting system, practice nondiscrimination, have demonstrated the capability to deliver emergency food and/or shelter programs, and if they are a private voluntary organization, they must have a voluntary board.

The EFSP funds are appropriated by Congress to help expand the capacity of food and shelter programs in local communities.

A local board consisting of representatives from the Department of Human Services, The Salvation Army, American Red Cross, Catholic Family Service, the Midland Clergy Association, the United Jewish Community, Family & Children's Service, United Way and the County Board of Commissioners oversees the distribution of these funds and will meet to review applications and allocate funds on May 22. United Way of Midland County provides administrative staff and functions as the local community's fiscal agent.

Last year EFSP dollars totaling \$52,929 helped provide 192 nights of shelter for families faced with abuse and violence, purchased more than \$5,000 of food, prevented 100 families from being removed from their homes and provided heat for 93 households.

For an application or more information, contact Amy Olson at United Way, (989) 631-3670. Completed applications are due by May 17 for consideration by the local board.

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THE DAILY Reporter

Print this story

Health plan offers help for uninsured

Print Page

By Roland Stoy-Staff Writer

COLDWATER — There is some help for the uninsured in addition to the First Presbyterian Free Clinic offered at the church on Thursdays.

Addressing officials at a Tri-County Legislative Conference hosted by Branch County at the Branch Area Careers Center on Monday night, officials also from Hillsdale and St. Joseph counties heard Jayson Welter of the Bureau of Health Plan Management of Ingham County talked about a health plan offered in the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph district.

With the plans originating in Ingham County, Welter reached out to the rest of the state and now there are 53 counties with plans for the uninsured.

"This is not health insurance," said district Health Officer Steve Todd, who introduced Welter. "There are lots of things that are not covered." It is also not Medicaid or an HMO.

"The goal of the plan is to allow people to get treatment before an illness gets more serious," Todd said. "We're trying to give a little service to a lot of people."

Welter said the organizing principles of the plans are to provide an organized benefit to Adult Benefits Waiver (ABW) program beneficiaries and uninsured residents of the tri-county area, designed to give basic coverage to what members use most, with help based on income rather than medical need.

He explained there is a Plan A the health plan manages for the state with enrollment through the state Department of Human Services, and a Plan B, with clients enrolled locally by the community health agency

Plan A is for incomes at or below 38 percent of the poverty level and Plan B for those with income less than 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

For Plan A, for example, a family of two would be making \$4,928 and for Plan B, \$20,535.

Regardless, Welter said those in need should investigate to see if they would qualify and contact the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Health Plan (BHSJHP) at (517) 279-4200 for Plan A, or (517) 279-9561 extension 132 for Plan B.

For example, emergency ambulance, and outpatient hospital facility fees are not covered in Plan B.

Some services not covered by either are chiropractic, inpatient hospitalization, speech, physical, respiratory, cardiac and occupational therapy.

Cards are issued for the respective plans, and there is a prescription drug benefit.

Through April 5, 2007. Plan A had 174 clients in Branch County, 208 in Hillsdale and 305 in St. Joseph County. With Plan B, Branch had 198 enrolled, Hillsdale 116 and St. Joseph 395.

Todd said there is a question and answer sheet online at www.bhsj.org regarding the health plan.

MI-Rx Card Enrollment Still Low

MIRS, Friday, May 4, 2007

The state is having trouble getting large numbers of citizens to sign up for the state's prescription drug discount card program, the MI-Rx program, and public health officials say it's because not enough people know about the program.

During her 2004 State of the State address, Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** unveiled the MI-RX card with the hopes of enrolling as many as 200,000 senior citizens and working people without insurance in the program. The idea is the program would cut the costs of their prescription drugs by as much as 20 percent.

However, the state only has 20 percent of that number — 41,000 citizens — enrolled in the program. Department of Community Health (DCH) Spokesman T.J. **BUCHOLZ** said this is an awareness issue.

The state had been putting up TV ads to tell citizens about the program. However, the budget crunch put a hold on the ads, which haven't run for about a year.

"It's a matter of resources we simply don't have," he said.

The state puts pamphlets in state offices and advertises through public service announcements, but any other advertising money just isn't there.

"We could accommodate that many if they enrolled tomorrow," Bucholz said.

So far the program has resulted in more than \$130,000 in savings a month and saves the state's poor a combined \$2 million a year, the DCH reported today.

"With more than one million uninsured citizens in Michigan, connecting more than 41,000 citizens to this worthwhile program is one of the best ways to ensure that low-income residents get their prescription drugs at reduced prices," Granholm said. "No one in Michigan should have to make the painful decision between groceries or life-saving prescription drugs. The MiRx card helps thousands ease budgetary pressures in households all over the state."



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Published May 4, 2007

Home health care advocates protest cuts

Chris Andrews
Lansing State Journal

About 150 home health care workers and advocates gathered Thursday in Lansing to protest budget cuts that would reduce their pay.

The group marched from the Michigan Corrections Organization office on Kalamazoo Street to the Boji Tower at Allegan Street and Capitol Avenue for a Senate hearing on the budget for the Michigan Department of Community Health.

The group is concerned Senate-passed budget cuts will undo recent raises and lead to a reduction in hours for a group of low-wage workers already struggling to make ends meet.

The home health care workers serve seniors and people with disabilities on Medicaid. They are represented by the Service Employees International Union.

Diane Nussbaum, 49, of Lansing said she receives \$898 a month to care for her 26-year-old son, who can't walk or talk because of a seizure disorder. She said a pay reduction would make it even harder to get by.

"I have a hard time just making bills," she said.

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or candrews@lsj.com.

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Ron LeFlore busted for failing to pay child support

Former Tiger arrested at Gibraltar Trade Center while signing autographs.

Former Detroit Tiger Ronald LeFlore was arrested Saturday while signing autographs for fans at Gibraltar Trade Center in Mount Clemens on outstanding warrants for failing to pay child support.

The 58-year-old LeFlore was taken into custody by Wayne County Sheriff's deputies, who were assisted by deputies from the Macomb County Sheriff's Office, police said.

He owes approximately \$48,000 in past child support bills, police said.

A Wayne County sheriff's official Sunday would not comment on the arrest.

LeFlore's bond was set at \$17,009 cash, a county jail official said.

LeFlore was signing autographs for \$4 each at the trade center with former Detroit Tigers pitcher Mickey Lolich when police entered the facility and took him into custody.

It was not clear whether LeFlore had a contract with the center to make a personal appearance and whether Gibraltar lost money because of the arrest. A general manager at the center would not comment Sunday.

LeFlore, who played six seasons with the Tigers, was the subject of a 1978 movie, "One in a Million: The Ron LeFlore Story," about his rise as a baseball player after being a prison inmate.

-- Mitch Hotts

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Journal Register News Service

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Food program cuts threaten working poor

Saturday, May 05, 2007

By Sarah Kellogg and Pat Shellenbarger

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Clarissa Mancha will have to decide soon whether to pay her gas bill or buy food for herself and her three children.

"Either we go without heat," she said, "or we go without food."

Like many of the working poor, Mancha, 33, is caught in the middle: She makes too much money to qualify for food stamps, but not enough to pay the rent, utilities, insurance, groceries and other expenses.

With one in nine Michigan residents turning to food stamps as the economy continues to stall, President Bush's plan to trim more than \$540 million from the food assistance program over five years could thrust more into that same bind, state officials say.

"This is a critical support to families," said Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services. "Ten percent of Michigan families receive some food assistance. We have more Michigan citizens receiving food stamps than ever before."

Food stamps have become a staple for Michigan's poor and working-class families. In 2000, an average of 602,000 Michigan residents received food stamps every month. By last year it had grown to 1.1 million. About 80 percent of food stamps go to households with children.

Michigan is not alone. The federal government estimated about 35 million Americans lacked enough money to purchase food on a regular basis in 2006. Nationally, about 26 million individuals receive food stamps every month.

Bush administration officials argue they expect food stamp caseloads to shrink. With the federal budget strained due to spending on the war, there is little extra for food programs.

Anti-poverty advocates hope Congress limits the president's cuts, which include elimination of a program that automatically qualifies some families for food stamps when they receive welfare, child care or transportation assistance. About 26,000 Michigan residents would be affected.

"In our view, it's extremely short-sighted to cut this support," Udow said. "Food assistance is provided to people who are in serious need."

Legislation introduced in Congress on Thursday would invest an additional \$20 billion in nutrition programs over the next five years, most earmarked for food stamps.

Udow and other Michigan officials are pressing Congress to reject the administration's efforts to cut the \$37 billion program this year. Instead, they would like lawmakers to expand eligibility to more working-poor families and increase the monthly benefit.

That could help countless Michigan residents who, faced with plant closings and layoffs, have been forced into part-time and low-paying jobs but are not eligible for food stamps.

Mancha applied for food stamps a few years ago, but was turned down, because the \$800 she takes home every other week puts her slightly above the income limit for a family of four.

"I'm not asking for Medicaid. I don't need cash assistance," she said. "All I need is a little more for food."

She knows it, because she is a part-time employee of In the Image, a Grand Rapids charity that gives used clothing, furniture and other household goods to low-income people. Requests for help have increased dramatically the past year, while donations have declined, she said.

The Department of Human Services sends about 50 clients a day to In the Image looking for furniture and clothing, Mancha said.

"I know my situation," she said, "but there's always someone whose situation is worse than mine."

The average family of four qualifies for a maximum of \$518 in food stamps monthly, while the maximum for individuals is \$155, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. To qualify for benefits, individuals must have a gross monthly income of \$1,062 or less. A family of four is eligible if it has a gross monthly household income of \$2,167 or less.

"Given Michigan's high unemployment, given the growth in low-wage jobs, we need to have a fully funded Food Stamp program," said Sharon Parks, a spokeswoman for the Michigan League for Human Services. "

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05/05/2007



Record-Eagle/Garret Ellison

Samantha Rusch, 25, of Traverse City, holds daughter Madeline.

Charity groups overrun by utility requests

BY GARRET ELLISON

gellison@record-eagle.com

TRAVERSE CITY — When Samantha Rusch received an electricity shut-off notice in the mail, the young mother of two sought help from the local Department of Human Services office.

No money here, they said. Try Father Fred.

She turned to the charitable organization on Thursday, and brought along her 3-

week-old daughter, Madeline, born with Down syndrome and who must perpetually remain hooked to a wall-plugged Apnea monitor.

Rusch, 25, of Traverse City, discovered the Father Fred Foundation was able to pay \$200 of the \$402 needed to keep the juice flowing after Monday. It's not enough, she said, but it's something.

State officials on Friday took steps to fill some gaps, as Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed a bill to reinstate \$22 million for "low-income energy efficiency assistance."

Details on when that money might be available must be worked out, said Mary

Marois, DHS director for Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties.

"It will certainly help out Father Fred," Marois said. "The total burden will not be on them. The state will again have some money to put in the hopper."

Citizens who normally went to the DHS for help increasingly are turning to area charities, causing them to abandon other projects to meet the new demand.

"We're being tapped out," said Martie Manty, executive director of Father Fred. "We just got hit pretty hard a month ago because of this state budget disaster."

Father Fred mobilized the local Knights of Columbus councils to raise funds and awareness this weekend.

Manty estimated that 30 people each day come to Father Fred for utility assistance.

Sometimes all they can say is "come in for some food and put that money towards your energy bill," she said.

Father Fred refers clients like Rusch to the Salvation Army and Love INC for additional help. Between the three, they collectively have \$15,000 monthly for utility assistance.

But the Salvation Army is tapped out for May, said Manty. The money comes from community donations, and utility assistance "is the biggest need in our budget."

Rusch's fiancé works 60-hour-plus weeks while she tends the kids, Kaden, 2, and Madeline. They rent a cabin in the Spider Lake area and their Cherryland Electric Cooperative bill totals \$720.27, which she's been chipping away at, bit-by-bit.

"I'll have to find a way to pay another \$318.10 before next month," she said. "I'd really be lost if I didn't have some help."

Marois said many consumers are receiving shut-off notices now because winter has passed and utilities won't face criticism over killing the heat in freezing temperatures.

Marois controls about \$70,000 per month in utility assistance for those counties, allocated to folks after a needs test based on income and assets.

The money came from the State Emergency Relief program, at least until April 13, when state officials sent a directive to curtail all energy-related expenditures out of that program.

Friday's legislation could alleviate some of the pressure, but Marois said her office receives daily memos about cutting assistance. Funds for front-end juvenile delinquent and child abuse and neglect prevention are being cut. Also planned is a reduction in payments to Medicaid providers.

"Every day there's something more," she said.

Marois blasted state legislators for their deadlock over how to pull the state out its financial crisis and accused them of turning a blind eye to the state's needy residents.

"We have got to reinvent government in this state," she said. "We can no longer go on like this."

On the Web: www.fatherfredfoundation.com

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Article published May 7, 2007

Affordable housing project begins in Howell

By Dan Meisler

DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Before the end of the year, a low-income family could be moving into a new affordable single-family home in Howell.

Construction is set to begin on the home on North Street within two months, and officials from First National Bank, social service agencies and governments attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the house on Friday.

"Much like Habitat for Humanity, we're creating a visible example of affordable housing and showing the community it is doable," said Kathleen Kline-Hudson, chairwoman of the Housing Growth and Opportunities group and assistant director of the Livingston County Planning Department.

"We hope to really set a precedent with this," added Catherine Rea Dunning, director for Livingston County services at the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency.

OLHSA's housing subsidiary, Venture Inc., is helping build the home, and has done similar projects in Oakland County.

The land for the home was donated by First National Bank.

Bank President Steve Walsh attended the ceremony, and said the donation was part of the bank's mission.

"The bank is committed to the ongoing growth and welfare of the county," he said.

He said the bank took possession of the land through a foreclosure process in which the previous owner gave the bank the deed in lieu of foreclosure. City records indicate that happened in 2003 and that the bank sold the plot to Venture for \$1.

Walsh said it was unusual for the bank to donate land, but he wouldn't rule it out in the future.

Howell Mayor Gerri Moen said she much prefers to have a home on the lot, instead of having it remain vacant.

"It's a very good idea," she said. "We need all levels of affordability in the city."

The home will be a "very basic" three-bedroom house, Kline-Hudson said, with about 1,200 square feet.

All three families being considered for the home are in the process of qualifying for a mortgage under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's rural development program, Dunning said. So even if they don't get the home, they should be able to find another house with the mortgages secured, she said.

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Dan Meisler at (517) 552-2857 or at dmeisler@gannett.com.

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The Daily Telegram

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MONDAY MAY 7, 2007 Last modified: *Friday, May 4, 2007 9:31 AM EDT*

New jail training offered

Two programs starting Monday at the Lenawee County Jail will address relationship and conflict resolution for inmates in an effort to keep inmates from returning to jail.

By [Dennis Pelham](#)

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN — One way to keep people out of jail may be to make them happier at home.

That's the idea behind two programs that will be offered at the Lenawee County Jail starting Monday, said Lenawee County District Judge James E. Sheridan. He gave county commissioners a quick overview Thursday of relationship and conflict resolution training programs being made available at the jail through the private group Marriages That Work.

A \$1.1 million grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services to a coalition of social agencies in Southeast Michigan is funding a number of similar efforts in the region, Sheridan said. About \$300,000 has been allocated for programs in Lenawee County targeting people in the lower income population.

One of the first steps will be to bring back to the jail a program called Pick a Partner. It was piloted last year with 10 women inmates given training in how to avoid marrying a jerk, Sheridan said.

Studies have shown that the chances of re-offending drop significantly for people who develop stable relationships after being incarcerated, he said. Pick a Partner is aimed at giving women an understanding of how to develop a relationship through a series of steps where trust and commitment are developed, and avoid a cycle of harmful relationships.

"The idea of the skills that we're after are skills that are very easy to apply," Sheridan said.

The Pick a Partner Program will also be offered later to male inmates at the jail, said Joyce Faulhaber of Marriages That Work. And within one to two months the group hopes to begin offering courses to men and women at the jail in a program called PREP, for Premarital Relationship Enhancement Program, she said.

PREP teaches a system of positive conflict resolution and communications skills to help strengthen and preserve marriages and relationships.

Both programs will involve six two-hour class sessions conducted in the jail by an instructor from Marriages That Work.

Sheriff Larry Richardson told commissioners he appreciates the efforts of Sheridan and Marriages That Work to bring programs of this type to jail inmates.

"It's been one of our goals to give people the skills and knowledge needed to be successful once they leave the jail," Richardson said.

Faulhaber said evaluations of the programs will be taken from participants and the group hopes to collect follow-up information to measure the effectiveness of the training.

The 10 women who went through the pilot Pick a Partner program last year all gave it favorable reviews, she said. Most said they were particularly impressed with a relationship-attachment model that demonstrates good and bad approaches by measuring the development of factors ranging from getting to know a partner to trust, reliance, commitment and physical intimacy.

Both of the programs will provide people with relationship skills they may not have learned growing up and that can help them be successful, she said.

“If people want to make a change, that has to come from within,” Faulhaber said. “If nothing else, hopefully, we’re planting a seed for future reference.”

The Department of Human Services, Community Action Agency and other social agencies will also be referring clients to classes that will be available to the public through the grant program, she said. United Way of Jackson is in charge of the grant finances, she said, in a coalition that includes Marriages That Work, Marriage Resource Center of Wayne County and Michigan Family Forum based in Lansing.

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Article published May 5, 2007
FactCheck examines GOP debate
From FactCheck.org

Summary

Ten Republican candidates for president debated at the Reagan Library in California, the first GOP debate of the 2008 campaign. Here and there we found stumbles, spin and exaggerations, just as we did at the Democratic debate a week earlier.

- Giuliani claimed that adoptions shot up 73 percent while he was mayor. In fact, the net increase over his entire tenure was 17 percent.
- Brownback hyped the medical potential of stem cells taken from adults and not embryos, failing to mention their limitations.
- Hunter claimed that 155,000 non-Mexicans were seized crossing illegally from Mexico last year. The actual figure is 98,153.
- Romney described a Massachusetts health care plan he backed as “a fabulous program,” when in fact it has not fully taken effect and only half the low-income persons who are eligible have signed up.

These and more are detailed below.

Analysis

The 10 candidates were questioned for 90 minutes May 3 at the Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, California. The event was co-sponsored by MSNBC and the political Web site politico.com.

Here's what we found:

New York Adoptions

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani overstated a rise in adoptions during his term as mayor.

Giuliani: When I was mayor of New York City, I encouraged adoptions. Adoptions went up 65 to 70 percent; abortions went down 16 percent.

Actually, adoptions rose only 17 percent during Giuliani's tenure as mayor, according to the New York City Administration for Children's Services. It's true adoptions went up by 73 percent between 1994 and 1997 — the first three years he was in office. But from that peak they slid back by 32 percent before he left office, erasing most of the initial gain.

Source: The New York City Administration for Children's Services, Total adoptions Fiscal Year 1994-2001

New York "Safest"?

Giuliani also claimed credit for cutting crime sharply and said his was "the safest large city in America." It is certainly true that crime dropped sharply during Giuliani's tenure (1994-2001), but there's a small dispute about the "safest" claim.

The FBI, which maintains official statistics on crime rates in U.S. cities, makes a point of not ranking them, saying the figures "provide no insight into the many variables that mold the crime in a particular town, city, county, state, or region." Nevertheless, The Associated Press concluded from the FBI figures that New York City was "the safest big city in 2005." However, officials in San Jose, California, claim theirs is the safest city, based on their own study which they say takes into account the severity of the crimes committed. If that is true, then the truth of Giuliani's claim would rest on what the definition of "large" is. San Jose has a population of 911,000.

Stem-Cell Spin

Kansas Sen. Sam Brownback strained to make his case against federal spending for medical research using embryonic stem cells. He said cells from embryos aren't needed:

Brownback: I've studied this matter a great deal. We are curing and healing people with adult stem cells. It is not necessary to kill a human life for us to heal people, and we're doing it with adult stem cell work and it's getting done.

That's true as far as it goes: Some diseases are being cured with adult stem cells. Scientists have successfully used them to treat leukemia and lymphoma as well as a variety of different blood disorders. More recently, several small clinical trials have shown promising results in the treatment of muscle damage, chronic skin diseases and Parkinson's disease. But the National Institutes of Health points out that adult stem cell treatments face serious limitations. Because adult stem cells have not yet been shown to have the ability to transform into any type of cell, they must be taken directly from the body part in question. Unfortunately, many body parts do not contain adult stem cells, and many other parts that do contain stem cells contain them in very limited quantities. Also, adult stem cells are extremely difficult to grow in laboratory conditions.

Stale Figures at the Border

California Rep. Duncan Hunter greatly exaggerated the problems at the Mexican border by using a stale statistic:

Hunter: Last year we had 155,000 folks who came across from Mexico who were from other countries in the world — some from communist China, some from Iran, some from Korea.

Actually, only 98,153 non-Mexicans were arrested crossing into the U.S. from Mexico in fiscal 2006, which ended Sept. 30. The figure Hunter used is from a year earlier, fiscal 2005. The Border Patrol attributes the sharp decline to increased numbers of agents and a tougher policy on returning non-Mexicans back to their countries of origin rather than releasing them inside the U.S., among other factors.

The Border Patrol won't say how many of the non-Mexicans were from China, Iran or Korea in the most recent year. In fiscal 2004, according to Border Patrol figures obtained by Republican Rep. Tom Tancredo 13 Iranians, 22 Koreans and 866 Chinese were apprehended along the Mexican border. What the Border Patrol will say is that in fiscal 2006, 98.6 percent of the non-Mexicans were from five other Latin American countries.

Hunter's Fence

Hunter also made some dramatic claims for a security fence erected at the busy border area south of San Diego, implying it would have similar effects once extended to the Gulf of Mexico. But he didn't tell the whole story:

Hunter: I built that border fence. We brought down the smuggling of people and narcotics by more than 90 percent. ... And I wrote that law that extends the San Diego fence for 854 miles, across Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, that the president signed in October.

Hunter could be right about his claim of a 90 percent reduction in smuggling at San Diego. But the fence proved much more expensive to build than predicted, and to a large extent it merely moved illegal border crossings eastward.

San Diego's 14-mile fence was supposed to cost \$14 million, but the Department of Homeland Security now estimates that by the time it's finished it will have cost \$127 million, or \$9 million per mile, to build. Litigation by environmentalists over the feds' proposal to lop off the tops of two mesas and pour 5.5 million cubic feet of dirt into a valley to flatten the terrain caused major construction delays.

According to the Congressional Research Service, overall apprehensions in the San Diego sector declined by 76 percent after the fence was begun. Meanwhile, however, apprehensions increased in others sectors further east, most notably a 591 percent increase in the Tucson sector between fiscal 1992 and 2004.

Romney's "Fabulous" Health Care

Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney called his state health care experiment "a fabulous program" accomplished without any "government takeover":

Romney: I love it! It's a fabulous program. ... And this is a country that can get all of our people insured with not a government takeover, without HillaryCare, without socialized medicine. Instead, get the market to do its job, let people have health care that they can afford, get the market to do its job, let people have the opportunity to choose policies in the private sector. We didn't expand government programs. We didn't raise taxes. There was no government takeover.

Romney's praise, however, is a bit premature — and while the plan is not government-administered health insurance, it includes mandates for individuals and employers, minimum coverage requirements, subsidized insurance and government-enforced fines for noncompliance.

Overall, it's too soon to tell how successful the Massachusetts plan will be. The requirements for health coverage do not go into effect until July. In an April statement, the Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector, the entity created to oversee the program, said that nearly 70,000 people had signed up for subsidized health plans available for low-income individuals and families. That number is half of those eligible. But the total estimate of uninsured Massachusetts residents is 372,000. The state has a long way to go.

And it has hit some snags in implementing the law. The initial bids from insurance companies were much more expensive than what Romney had touted, according to the Boston Globe and Associated Press, and a Massachusetts Association of Health Plans survey found more than 200,000 insured residents would need to buy additional coverage to meet the original state requirements. Those requirements have since been changed.

Special Interest Boogeymen

Arizona Sen. John McCain blamed “special interests” for hogging radio frequencies, “which the American people are supposed to have and our first responders are supposed to have.” Actually, that issue was settled in the last Congress, and police, firefighters and others who respond to emergencies are scheduled to get the space by February 2009.

It is true there has been a delay. A decade ago Congress set 2006 as the deadline for broadcasters to give up the vast swaths of frequency space they now use to send programs by old-fashioned analog technology and start using different frequencies and more modern digital technology exclusively.

But McCain oversimplifies when he blames “special interests” for the delay. While it is true that broadcasters were in no rush to give up their analog channels, they had good reason: As recently as two years ago 21 million U.S. households (about one in five) still relied exclusively on analog sets and would have been unable to receive TV programs without the purchase of a new set or a converter box. The truth is that other “special interests” helped push through the legislation McCain favored. These included Motorola and other electronics manufacturers who stand to gain from sales of emergency radios and digital TV sets. We reported on this in an article in 2005.

Cut Wisconsin's Welfare Caseload 93 Percent?

Ex-Gov. Tommy Thompson claimed that he was “the one that started welfare reform, reduced welfare caseload ... in the state of Wisconsin, by 93 percent.” This figure is technically accurate, though a study commissioned by the state’s Department of Workforce Development in 2001 argued “that a clarification is needed.”

According to figures from the state, the official welfare caseload in Wisconsin was approximately 100,000 in 1987 and fell to about 6,500 in 2001 – a 93 percent decrease. However, when combined with other forms of case management assistance, such as child care, food stamps, Medicaid, enrollment in government programs held steady. And spending for those services dropped only slightly, as shown by these two charts from Rebecca Swartz with the Department of Workforce Development:

It's officially debate season, with both the Republican and the Democratic candidates trading barbs in the past week. In all of their encounters, we'll be combing through their words, checking their facts.

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State defaults on kids

May 6, 2007

BY ROCHELLE RILEY

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

As far as the 148-member Michigan Legislature and one beleaguered governor are concerned, the point of budget deliberations, arguments and competing plans is all business, all jobs, all the time: what taxes businesses should pay, what policies encourage job creation, how best to attract investment, etc.

But if they really want to talk about Michigan's future, they have to talk more about Michigan's children.

What if all of the budget discussions in Lansing began with: What is best for children? What if the state created a Children First Budget that, by its very nature, would eliminate all the other money the state has to spend on people later in life because they were shortchanged as children?

The damage starts early

Michigan has public schools that are graduating children who are unable to read, unable to attend college and unable to work. It will spend millions of dollars for decades taking care of those children, because they will not be the ones beating a path to the state border to find nicer, warmer, more progressive places to live.

Of Michigan's 1.6 million Medicaid enrollees, 950,000 are children. The state and its nonprofit hospitals care for a disproportionate number of patients they would not have if the state had an insurance system that allowed residents to practice prevention instead of cope with crisis. The state Medicaid budget is \$8 billion, but only about a fifth of that is spent on those children.

What if our state legislators decided to stop throwing around plans branded with elephants and asses and, instead, sat down together and built one, single budget from the ground up, starting with children?

Students in the balance

Officials have talked about privatizing everything from universities to prisons. But what would work -- restructuring government to fit our future instead of our past -- doesn't happen. The most radical thing the Legislature could do is to ask the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, or some other education-interested savior, to help Michigan create schools that work, teach a 21st-Century curriculum and put children on a level playing field from the time they're 5. Those children, treated like future leaders and CEOs and scientists, would be less likely to need Medicaid because they would be less likely to be out of a job or to have children at 13 or to be in jail by 17.

But folks in Lansing seem to always want the moms and children to sink with the ship -- cutting health and education services first.

In North Carolina, a state that cares about its children, Gov. Mike Easley has signed a state spending plan that included 8% raises for public school teachers and 6% for university and community college staffs, hired 100 middle-school literacy coaches, and provided \$95 million to improve mental health treatment in community settings.

Maybe if the folks in Lansing build the budget Children First, and stop acting like children, it would not only be balanced, but all done before June 1, when cuts in education and Medicaid kick in -- and kick children, again.

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Don't make vulnerable children pay for state's budget crisis

May 6, 2007

Jenifer Daniels, 28, Oak Park

It is shameful to see our children receiving the short end of the stick in our current budget crisis. Whether it is reduced education funding for K-12, eliminating grants for college and university students, or reducing the foster care budget, Michigan's children are hurting. How selfish are we as adults to do this? Or is the real issue that the legislators who are making the decisions aren't directly affected by them?

Peter Stoyanoff, 65, Lexington

When children are involved, conventional budget rules must be set aside. The daily allotment of funds granted for each foster child is barely adequate. Cutting funds allocated to the foster care program would have serious short-term, and some long-term consequences. The system itself needs to be fixed. In talking with a mother who adopted two of her foster children, she expressed the opinion shared by other parents in the program, that many workers responsible for these children are very disappointing in both their attitude and actions. This agency, like many other state agencies, wastes tax dollars. This is one system that should continue to be fully funded, but one that needs to be placed in a high priority to resolve the problems.

John Walus, 55, Mt. Clemens

This is a tough issue. You want to do what is best for the children who unfortunately find themselves in circumstances that are not of their making, but you also want to be fair to the parents if fairness is warranted. Cases involving obvious abuse are easy to decide. However, I would submit the majority of cases are not as clear-cut. While erring on the side of caution, efforts to re-establish the family unit should be a priority of the state, and I do not see how this can be done if the program is not properly funded.

Ken Schneider, 47, Waterford

Candidates are always kissing babies and such on the campaign trail. Either these are fraudulent, insincere photo-ops, or those elected really care about kids. If the foster care budget is gutted any further, we might as well stop pretending that society cares. Keep it up, and eventually some of the 19,000 foster clients, will end up added to the 50,000-plus prisoner count -- or worse tragedies.

Claudreen Jackson, 66, Detroit

Foster care should be off the table. One of the measures of a society is how we take care of our less fortunate members. One of the responsibilities of our legislators is to predict the consequences of their cuts, which in this case would cost more in the future because many of these children would end up in the welfare system or prison. Another responsibility is to create a focused, more efficient management of how they spend the revenue they collect.

Thomas A. Baird, 51, Bay City

I firmly believe that additional money should be added to this critical program. Workers currently are overworked and have made some bad decisions recently because of the overload. Clear, concise and up-to-date reports on any foster care child should be made available to the court. Better training for judges throughout the state is needed. Way too often, these foster children flat-out lie right to a judge's face. Millions of dollars need to be added to this budget for additional workers and better training for all involved.

Sherri Muzher, 37, Mason

Since Gov. Jennifer Granholm and the Legislature are expected to keep waltzing in Michigan's "Dancing with the Fools," they may wish to consider that only 50% of foster youths graduate from high school and 1% from college. According to state Supreme Court Justice

Maura Corrigan, it's pivotal to provide courts with the "resources, information and training they need so judges can track cases, child welfare agencies and courts can collaborate, and children can have a voice in the process." Unless we do something, more precious children will become casualties in an already fragile system.

Jack Clear, 58, Carp Lake

This is Lansing's form of a child's temper tantrum. Scream and shout I'm going to cut children, schools, medical care, etc., to invoke empathy and approve more taxes. I think we have made it fairly clear that we will accept a one-year increase in taxes coupled with no new programs or additional disbursements in order to get through this crisis. But read my lips: One year only.

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Trooper Union Donation Made Official

MIRS, Friday, May 4, 2007

Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** signed **SB 0404** today, legislation that officially accepts the Michigan State Troopers Association's (MSTA) \$400,000 donation to the Michigan State Police (MSP) so 29 troopers weren't laid off.

Due to budget cuts, the state was going to lay the troopers off April 8. The MSTA's executive board agreed to pay the salaries and benefits of these employees to get them through June 2, 2007 (See "**Trooper Union Donation Stops Layoffs**," 4/6/07). Whether the state will save these troopers' jobs by setting aside enough money to cover their salaries from June 2 to the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30 is yet to be seen.

The trooper salary funding is just one piece of the \$77.5 million supplemental, none of which is General Fund money. The rest of the money goes to different state departments based on the Budget Office's recommendations.

The lone exception is \$63,000 of General Fund money put into the budget by the House that was not recommended by the Budget Office.

This includes funding for the:

- Shiawassee Armory Replacement Project. The appropriation increases the total cost of this armory project from \$5.7 million to \$6.4 million. The cost increase will be funded with Federal and State Restricted funding.
- Department of Community Health's Health Information Technology Initiative. The \$7.3 million appropriation of restricted funding is for financing the health information technology project.
- Dental Sealants. The \$250,000 appropriation of private funds recognizes a private grant from Delta Dental that will provide dental sealants for low-income children.
- Department of Environmental Quality Fund Shifts. There is a shift of \$150,000 from federal funds to restricted revenue in the Air Quality Program, and a shift of \$737,000 from federal funds to state restricted revenue in the Land and Water Management Program.
- Department of Human Services Donated Funds Positions. The \$3.7 million appropriation, funded by a combination of federal, local, and private money, pays for 45 full-time positions in Human Services field offices. These workers will be placed in community agencies to help clients achieve success in reaching independence.
- Central Support Accounts. This is a \$171,000 appropriation reduction in rental payments. The reduction is made up of a combination of federal and General Fund money. The savings result from the cancellation of leases on unoccupied local offices in Lincoln Park and Detroit, something Rep. Dudley **SPADE** (D-Tipton) brought up in a press release this week.
- Department of Labor and Economic Growth Low-Income Energy Assistance. The appropriation provides \$22 million of restricted funding for low-income energy assistance programs. These funds result from payments to the state by Detroit Edison and Consumers Energy from electricity rate increases approved by the Public Service Commission.
- Job Training Grants. This \$35 million of federal money pays for employment and workforce training programs, mostly local Michigan Works agencies.

- Workforce Development. This \$6.4 million in federal money assists workers whose jobs are affected by foreign trade.
- Workforce Development. This \$2 million in federal money is for workforce training programs.

May 7, 7:37 AM EDT

Poll shows majority of Michigan voters support tax increase

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- Nearly two of three Michigan residents responding to a newspaper survey said the state should raise taxes and cut spending simultaneously to fix the state's budget crisis.

More of those polled favored a higher sales tax than an income tax increase, according to the survey published in Monday editions of The Detroit News.

The state government faces a \$700 million shortfall in this year's budget. Gov. Jennifer Granholm, a Democrat, has ordered a cut in school aid of up to \$125 per student and reduced Medicaid payments by June 1 unless she and the Legislature reach agreement on a budget.

The Republican-controlled Senate earlier rejected Granholm's proposed 2 percent tax on services such as auto repairs, dry cleaning and movie tickets, which she said would raise \$1.5 billion.

Senate Republicans are opposed to any tax increase this fiscal year but have said they would consider tax increases to address the projected \$2 billion deficit in the budget for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1.

The statewide poll of 600 voters, conducted April 30 through Friday by EPIC/MRA of Lansing, showed 84 percent of respondents believe there is a budget emergency, while 14 percent said it hasn't reached the crisis stage yet.

The survey showed 64 percent of respondents thought the state should raise taxes while also reducing spending. Another 23 percent favored only budget cuts, while 6 percent supported only tax increases and 7 percent didn't know.

The margin of error was plus or minus 4 percentage points.

"The state's safety net is already frayed, so we can't do only cuts without really hurting people," poll respondent Barbara Glassheim, 53, of Southfield, told The News. "We need a combination of cuts and tax increases."

Another respondent, Rose Delleva of Roseville, said: "We should try budget cuts first. I'd prefer no tax increase at all. And we should look at cuts other than education. We always seem to go after schools first when there is a budget problem."

Asked to choose between extending the sales tax to services and raising the state income tax, 51 percent

of voters preferred taxing services, 30 percent favored a higher income tax and 11 percent said they opposed any tax boost. Eight percent were undecided.

Granholt spokeswoman Liz Boyd said the survey results came as no surprise.

"People know that there is a budget crisis in Michigan and that the governor is continuing to push for action on solving the problem with a combination of cuts, reforms and new revenue," Boyd said.

Information from: The Detroit News, <http://www.detroitnews.com>



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Michigan Department of Human Services Summarily Suspends the Group Day Care Home License, #DG500096046 of Rebecca Humenik

May 4, 2007

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children and Adult Licensing (OCAL) issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the license of Macomb County group day care home provider Rebecca Humenik, 22198 International, Macomb, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child day care group home.

The May 3, 2007 complaint investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding supervision, capacity, and discipline/child handling. OCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

Effective 6:00 p.m., May 4, 2007, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Rebecca Humenik from operating a group day care home at 22198 International, Macomb, Michigan or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept children for care after that date and time. The order also requires Ms. Humenik to inform all of the parents of children in her care that her license has been suspended and that she can no longer provide day care.

Ms. Humenik has held a license to operate a group day care home since March 23, 2001. The license was for twelve children.

Michigan law defines a group day care home as a private home in which more than six but not more than 12 minor children are given care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption. Group day care home includes a home that gives care to an unrelated minor child for more than four weeks during a calendar year.

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.